2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

months November to March inclusive. Diagram 1 shows the distribution of the rainfall during the year. Very little rain falls during other months. The initial rains of the year are ushered in by convectional storms and very heavy downpours. This causes a heavy run-off, flooding of the rivers and lake shores, and much erosion of the parched land which by this time has become

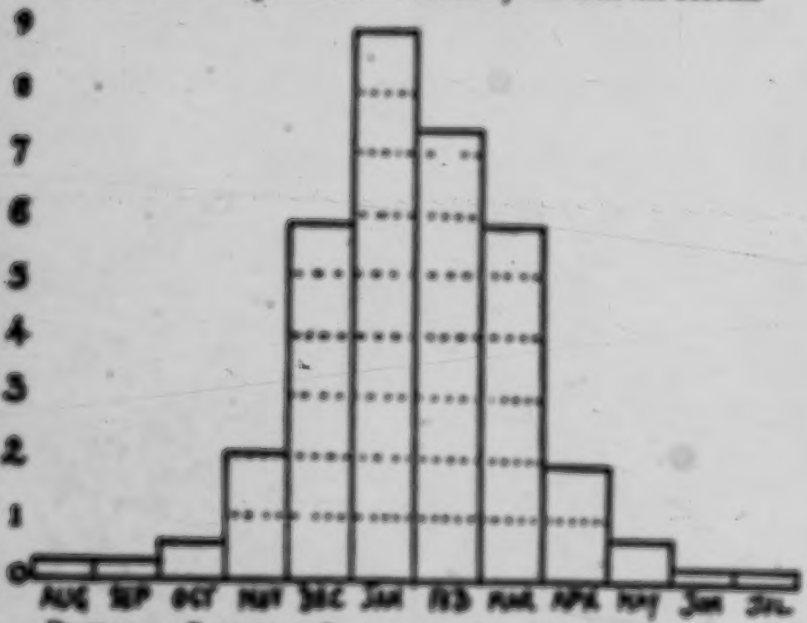

Diagram 1. Rainfall in Lowveld and Four Jommerow Districts. This diagram shows that almost the whole of the rainfall occurs between November and April.

very dusty. During December there is usually little rain for a short period of a week or two. After that the rains change their character and become more steady and drenching. They decrease in March and April, and thereafter, little rain falls.

The Yao concept of the seasons follows this feature of the climate. The year is divided into two seasons, called *cuku*, the wet season, and *cuu*, the dry season. The wet season is the one in which most agricultural activity is carried out. The gardens are hoed up and planted, weeded and tended, and the crops harvested, between the months of October and May. During

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

the dry season, in contrast to the busy wet season, there is much visiting and social activities are resumed. Dances and initiation ceremonies also are mostly held during the dry season. The only agricultural work done during this time is the clearing of the bush and the stacking of the brushwood ready for burning.

The temperatures are high. I have no records for the three stations in the area because recording has started only recently. It is hottest during the months just preceding the rains, i.e. September to December, and coldest during May to August. I have never heard of frosts in the area so it is unlikely that the temperature falls below freezing point. Hornby records the mean maximum temperature for Liwonde as 82·5° F. and the mean minimum temperature as 59·5° F. These are for Liwonde station which is in the Shire Valley. The temperature for the plains and the highlands is probably a few degrees less.

Vegetation

The natural vegetation in this area varies from thick rain forest along the permanent watercourses to open grassland in the marshy patches. In forestry reserves and other places where the vegetation has not been cut out, trees 20 to 30 feet high predominate with thin undergrowth. Along the Shire Valley much of the vegetation is untouched, but in the highlands and on the plain most of the unprotected forest has been cut out for garden lands. In the open spaces between trees the land is covered by elephant grass six to eight feet high.

Population

The density of the population in Nyasaland as a whole is high in comparison with that in the surrounding territories.[1] Within the Territory itself the densities in some districts are as high as anywhere in Africa.[2] The population as a whole is concentrated in the highland districts of Dedza and the Shire Highlands. The districts in which I worked are less densely populated than most of the districts in the Southern Province, but of average density

[1] Expressing densities as total population per square mile. Nyasaland, 133 (1945); Tanganyika, 170 (1948); Portuguese East Africa, 125 (1938); Southern Rhodesia, 113 (1948); Northern Rhodesia, 30 (1948).

[2] Chiradzulu district, 309·9; Cholo, 1,019; Zomba, 1,512. *Nyasaland Census*, 1945, Table 8.

121 impressed on people's memories and remembered by most of the people. Thus it
125 was desirable to find a useful reference date between 1910 and 1920. It might be thought that the death of King George V would be memorable. However, though all who were old enough at the time could remember the watchtakers, only a few could remember the death of King George.

125 This skeleton chronology was filled in by events of more local significance. For example, Kavinga's brick house was built in 1919, the present Nyambi succeeded in 1915, &c. In addition, in particular hamlets there were men who had been in the Army, or had been to work in South Africa or Southern Rhodesia. Usually they could recall the date of going and sometimes of return, though they may have lost count of the intervening years. Such dates were often useful points. A small minority had actually recorded the dates of birth and death of children.

In addition to this, it was possible to fix the ages of the young children by reference to harvests, since the Yao reckon two years in retrospect, 'last year' meaning before 205 the last harvest and 'the year before last' meaning the period before the harvest before last. Before the year before last, all time is merely *kale kale*, the only indication of the period being the pitch of the voice in which it is said or the presence or absence of an exclamatory 'E!' before speaking.

125 Particular care was taken to secure the ages of women and the dates at which they had borne children. There was, as mentioned above, some reticence in mention-(129) ing the names of dead children, but this was usually met successfully by questioning the women's male relatives who were generally more communicative on these points. (129) In spite of the care taken to obtain this information, it was impossible to fix the ages of the women in the sample, and they have been excluded from the major part of the analysis. In addition, there were thirty-nine men who were not available for questioning. These were all adults, the husbands of women in the hamlets. The 105 Yao are matrilineal and matrilocal, and men tend to spend much of their time away from the hamlet of their relatives-in-law. Since they are in many ways strangers in the hamlets no information could be obtained about them.

2. The Common Background to Fertility

All the hamlets visited were occupied by members of the Yao tribe. The Yao are an Islamized people who achieved the questionable distinction of being efficient slave raiders at the end of the nineteenth century. They are a matrilineal and pre-(364) dominantly matrilocal people living in hamlets of from about 5 to 100 huts or more.

(562)

TABLE I. *Age of Women at First Marriage*

Age of women	Age of women at first marriage												
	11–12	13–14	15–16	17–18	19–20	21–22	23–24	25–26	27–28	29–30	31–32	Total	Average age at first marriage
Under 20	0	0	1	18	0	0	1	1	—	—	—	21	18·1
20–29	0	0	1	11	0	0	0	0	—	1	0	13	18·3
Over 30	—	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	—	1	—	3	17·6
Totals	1	14	13	30	10	10	8	8	—	6	2	100	17·9

16: Sanderson D-9 (ca. 1920)1922 FT7 Yao FT7

Africa, Central; Religion. Sanderson.

A Note on Ceremonial Purification among the Wa'Yao, Nyasaland. 55
By Rowland Sanderson, M.B.C.S., F.R.G.S. 55

One of the effects of European influence in Africa is the breaking up of tribal organization and discipline. The rights of the individual being no longer subordinated to the common good, customs formerly observed by the village community as a whole die out, while those affecting the individual are still practised.

This tendency is well seen in the ancient ceremonies of purification among the Wa'Yao which are now rarely performed collectively, though the native, however highly "educated," still goes to the doctor to obtain the necessary medicines for removing, for instance, the contamination caused by contact with a corpse.

These collective ceremonies have already been described by various writers in respect of both Nyasaland and elsewhere,[1] but the Yao rites have not, I think, been given in detail, and the following notes may not, therefore, be altogether valueless.

The *Fyajiko* ceremony (*Gwapyiko*, "to sweep") is common to most Bantu tribes. In its simplest form it used to be performed annually by the Wa'Yao, at the beginning of the twelfth month, most of the months (lunar) being kept by means of a "calendar."[2] The whole village is thoroughly "spring-cleaned," all rubbish

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* In this, where the game is played on Sundays, Father Bernardine Nyao calls out, the song in Yaosaki runs:—

Yaeo, yaeo, yaeeda na mwaga,
Yaeo, yaeo, kuy mada.

Yaeo, yaeo, nkwa yaeo mtaa.
Yaeo, yaeo, I shall not be there any more.

Words repeated, successively, to the further left.

1 See Bernardine, M. C., "The Ruin Indians," pp. [illegible], [illegible]. Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology, 1894.

2 Duncan, "Before the Mountains," II., 278, 279.

3 A "calendar" consists of a string tied to two pegs in the wall of the house, or between two poles, on which are threaded twelve pieces of reed, bamboo or cornstalk. One of these is tucked in the other end of the string with these a new stem is seen.